



Greater Yellowstone Coalition

People protecting the lands, waters, and wildlife of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, now and for future generations.

March 14, 2011

Dear Chairman Brenden and members of the Senate Fish & Game Committee,

Tomorrow afternoon your committee will consider HB 172 regarding grizzly bear management in Montana. The Greater Yellowstone Coalition is concerned that this bill is premature given the current listed status of the grizzly bear in Montana. We ask that you oppose HB 172.

Grizzly bears remain a listed species under the federal Endangered Species Act throughout the state of Montana. More importantly, this iconic species remains threatened by declining food sources such as Yellowstone cutthroat trout and whitebark pine, and increasing conflicts with a growing human population. In contrast to wolves, grizzly bears reproduce slowly and remain vulnerable to environmental changes over which we have no control.

In the Yellowstone region, grizzly bear deaths have been close to or have exceeded the mortality limits monitored by the federal government as it assesses the recovery of Greater Yellowstone's grizzly bear population. The vast majority of these deaths have been because of humans. If we are reaching mortality thresholds while the bear is still protected by the Endangered Species Act, we believe that Montana's grizzly bear population cannot sustain additional annual mortality from grizzly bear hunting. As a result, it is premature to reclassify grizzly bears from a rare species to a species in need of management in order to facilitate grizzly bear hunts.

Furthermore, Montana law (MCA, 87-5-302) already enables MFWP to establish a grizzly bear hunt if grizzly bears are removed from the Endangered Species list, making this law unnecessary.

Thank you for your service in the Montana legislature. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or would like more information.

Sincerely,

Barb Cestero, Montana Director